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SUBJECT: First Lady's Visit to Jordan Gives Boost to Jordanian-American Relations

¶1. Summary: First Lady Laura Bush's October 25-26 visit to Jordan generated tremendous goodwill among Jordanian officials and garnered extensive, positive coverage in the local and regional media. Her meeting with King Abdullah and her visit to the King Hussein Cancer Center to promote the Breast Cancer Awareness Partnership brought widespread attention to one of the newest and most promising areas of bilateral cooperation. The First Lady's tour of Petra was covered by all media, and helped reinforce public perceptions of U.S. respect for Jordan's unique heritage. End summary.

¶2. First Lady Laura Bush's two-day visit to Jordan October 25-26 gave a strong boost to U.S.-Jordanian relations, and garnered favorable media coverage that reminded a sometimes skeptical public that America is making many positive contributions to Jordan's health and prosperity. Following lunch with the King, Mrs. Bush proceeded to the King Hussein Cancer Center (KHCC) where she met with children cancer patients and their parents, donated My Arabic Library books to the kids, and toured a telesynergy center where Jordanian doctors can consult on patients' cases live with doctors in the U.S. The centerpiece of her tour to the KHCC was her symbolic unveiling of a model of a new breast cancer screening center to be established through the U.S.-Middle East Breast Cancer Awareness Partnership. The event drew a large number of reporters, and highlighted the assistance the USG and private institutions such as the Susan G. Komen Foundation and the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center have offered to improve the prevention and treatment of cancer in Jordan and the region. The following day the First Lady toured Petra, recently named as one of the seven New Wonders of the World, including a stop at an ancient church that was excavated and protected with USAID funds. Media coverage of her tour helped spread the message of American respect for Jordan's heritage and American support in restoring that heritage.

Broadcast Media Coverage

¶3. State-run Jordan Television featured two separate but identical reports during its newscasts October 25 on the First Lady's activities in Jordan. The first report focused on her meeting with the King, while the second report focused on her visit to the King Hussein Cancer Center (KHCC) and the unveiling of the model of the new breast cancer screening center. The two reports were carried during the 6pm and 8pm Arabic newscasts, as well as the 10pm English newscast. Local television also carried a report on the First Lady's visit to Petra on October 26, with prominent images of her in front of the famous Treasury building.

¶4. The news piece on Mrs. Bush's meeting with the King, which led off the newscasts, featured footage of the King receiving the First Lady, and reported that the King had expressed his admiration for the First Lady's role in health issues and his appreciation for U.S. support to health and education in Jordan, stressing the importance of establishing the new screening center. The package also said the First Lady had expressed her appreciation and admiration of Jordan's efforts in the field of health and the standards of health care for

cancer patients in Jordan.

¶15. The piece on the First Lady's visit to the KHCC ran later in the newscasts, with footage of the First Lady's unveiling of the model and speaking with Princess Ghida and Princess Dina. The footage also showed Mrs. Bush's interaction with the children. The report in the Arabic newscasts featured brief excerpts from the First Lady's remarks voiced over in Arabic. Throughout the piece, the report provided information related to the new cancer center to be established.

¶16. The First Lady's visit to Petra was highlighted during the 6pm Arabic newscast October 26, broadcasting extensive footage from her tour, including walking down the long entry gorge called the Siq, standing in front of the Treasury, and viewing the Byzantine Church. The report included her remarks on the importance of Petra, voiced-over in Arabic.

Print Media

¶17. The First Lady's activities in Jordan attracted favorable, front-page coverage in all the local newspapers, with banner headlines and color photos on October 26, and somewhat less prominent coverage of the Petra tour in all dailies October 27.

¶18. King-First Lady Meeting: Press articles on her meeting with the King focused on the King's statements about the "importance of establishing the breast cancer screening center in Jordan" and his expression of appreciation for U.S. support for the kingdom's health programs. Print reports also highlighted the First Lady's praise for "the advanced level of health and medical services in Jordan, especially those offered to cancer patients" and her "eagerness to

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maintain cooperation and coordination with Jordanian medical institutions."

¶19. Sample headlines included: "King receives U.S. President's wife; stresses importance of establishing breast cancer early screening center in Jordan" (Ad-Dustour Arabic daily, October 26); "King expresses his appreciation for American support to health programs in Jordan" (Al-Ghad Arabic daily, October 26).

¶10. First Lady at the KHCC: Articles on the visit to KHCC featured extensive excerpts from her remarks at the unveiling ceremony. The stories also provided details about her tour of the KHCC and her interaction with children patients. Sample headlines included: "Laura Bush visits King Hussein Cancer Center; specialized center for breast cancer screening by the beginning of next year" (Al-Arab Al-Yawm Arabic daily, October 26); "Laura Bush unveils model of breast cancer center" (Al-Rai Arabic daily, October 26).

¶11. First Lady in Petra: Reports on the First Lady's visit to Petra highlighted her tour of the site and the briefings she received about the history and significance of Petra. All the stories ran excerpts from her remarks to the media about the importance of Petra as a heritage site and praise for archaeological cooperation between Jordan and the U.S.

¶12. Sample headlines included: "Laura Bush visits Petra and describes it as the most significant human civilization heritage site; praises cooperation between Jordan and America in the area of research and archaeological excavation" (Ad-Dustour Arabic daily, October 27).

¶13. Comment: The First Lady's visit to Jordan revealed once again the enduring strength of the U.S.-Jordanian relationship, and reinforced it. The Royal Palace and the GoJ pulled out all the stops to make her visit a success, and the government worked hard to generate media coverage that would be extensive and favorable. Aside from demonstrating the American commitment to Jordan's health and prosperity, the visit allowed a sometimes critical public to see and read a very positive story of U.S. assistance to, and respect for, the people of Jordan. End Comment.

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